



## Giving the community a voice: Lessons learned from a comprehensive survey in an urban neighborhood



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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 12 June 2015

Received in revised form 18 July 2016

Accepted 29 July 2016

Available online 31 October 2016

#### Keywords:

Baseline data

Community survey

Collaborative

Comprehensive

Evaluation

Focus groups

Needs assessment

Poverty

Urban neighborhoods

### ABSTRACT

Weinland Park, an urban neighborhood adjacent to The Ohio State University, has been targeted for revitalization following several decades of disinvestment. The goal of these efforts is to develop holistic solutions that break the cycle of poverty. Such an undertaking requires collecting baseline data to understand community needs, inform programming, and guide revitalization efforts. This paper describes the development and implementation of the Weinland Park Evaluation Project (WPEP) – a collaborative and comprehensive neighborhood survey and needs assessment. Using the RE-AIM framework as a conceptual model, the paper describes how the WPEP was designed to meet short-, medium-, and long-term community needs. In addition, it offers lessons learned as a guide for researchers designing neighborhood surveys and conducting community assessments. An Appendix A includes indicators measured via the survey tool.

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Adjacent to The Ohio State University's (OSU) campus in Columbus, Ohio, Weinland Park is an urban neighborhood that has witnessed disinvestment and socioeconomic transformation over the past 40 years. However, several foundations, institutions, and the City of Columbus have recently targeted the neighborhood for investments to break the cycle of poverty and establish a mixed-income, vibrant community. Gauging the effectiveness of such efforts requires gathering data and conducting a comprehensive evaluation to understand the needs of the population, inform future programming, and provide baseline indicators for evaluating change over time (Chaskin, Joseph, & Chipenda-Dansokho, 1997; Manela & Moxley, 1999; Moxley & Manela, 2000; Naparstek & Dooley, 1997; Ostrom, Lerner, & Freel, 1995).

This paper details development, implementation, and lessons learned from the Weinland Park Evaluation Project (WPEP), a comprehensive survey and needs assessment conducted prior to significant community development investments. The WPEP also aimed to satisfy residents' short-, medium-, and long-term needs,

respectively, through (i) connecting residents to appropriate social services, (ii) informing existing and future programming in the neighborhood, and (iii) guiding investments to create a mixed-income, dynamic community. The following section briefly reviews literature on neighborhood surveys and the value of collecting neighborhood-level information before describing the research site and rationale for conducting the WPEP. Procedures to develop, implement, analyze, and disseminate results from the survey are then detailed. The paper concludes with lessons learned during each project phase and recommendations to practitioners.

### 1. The value of neighborhood-level evaluation

Given that uniformity across communities is rare, especially with regard to poverty and its causes and consequences, neighborhood-level information is essential for developing effective strategies for neighborhood revitalization efforts. Those involved in the National Neighborhood Indicator's Project (NNIP), for example, have recognized that "... either the task at hand could not have been accomplished, or serious policy mistakes would likely have been made, if data at the neighborhood level had not been available" (Kingsley, 1999).

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representative of the neighborhood’s population, and we trained survey takers to adhere to evaluation protocols. Beyond those issues, we ensured that the WPEP was conducted in settings that could be replicated by similar projects (‘adoption’). The impact of the RE-AIM framework on the WPEP is discussed further in the conclusions.

### 2.1. Analytic methods

Drawing on previous neighborhood evaluations (e.g., [Kingsley, 1998](#)), we adopted a multi-scalar analytic method whereby

individual-level survey data is aggregated into sub-neighborhood and neighborhood-level indicators. Doing so accomplished two goals. First, our Institutional Review Board (IRB) would not allow any data to be presented in a way that would allow an individual to be identified as a survey participant, much less in a way that would allow others to deduce the participant’s survey responses. By aggregating the data, we would both fulfill IRB mandates and help tailor interventions to either the entire neighborhood or parts of the neighborhood. These sub-neighborhood analyses were especially crucial, as the neighborhood is largely bifurcated between a

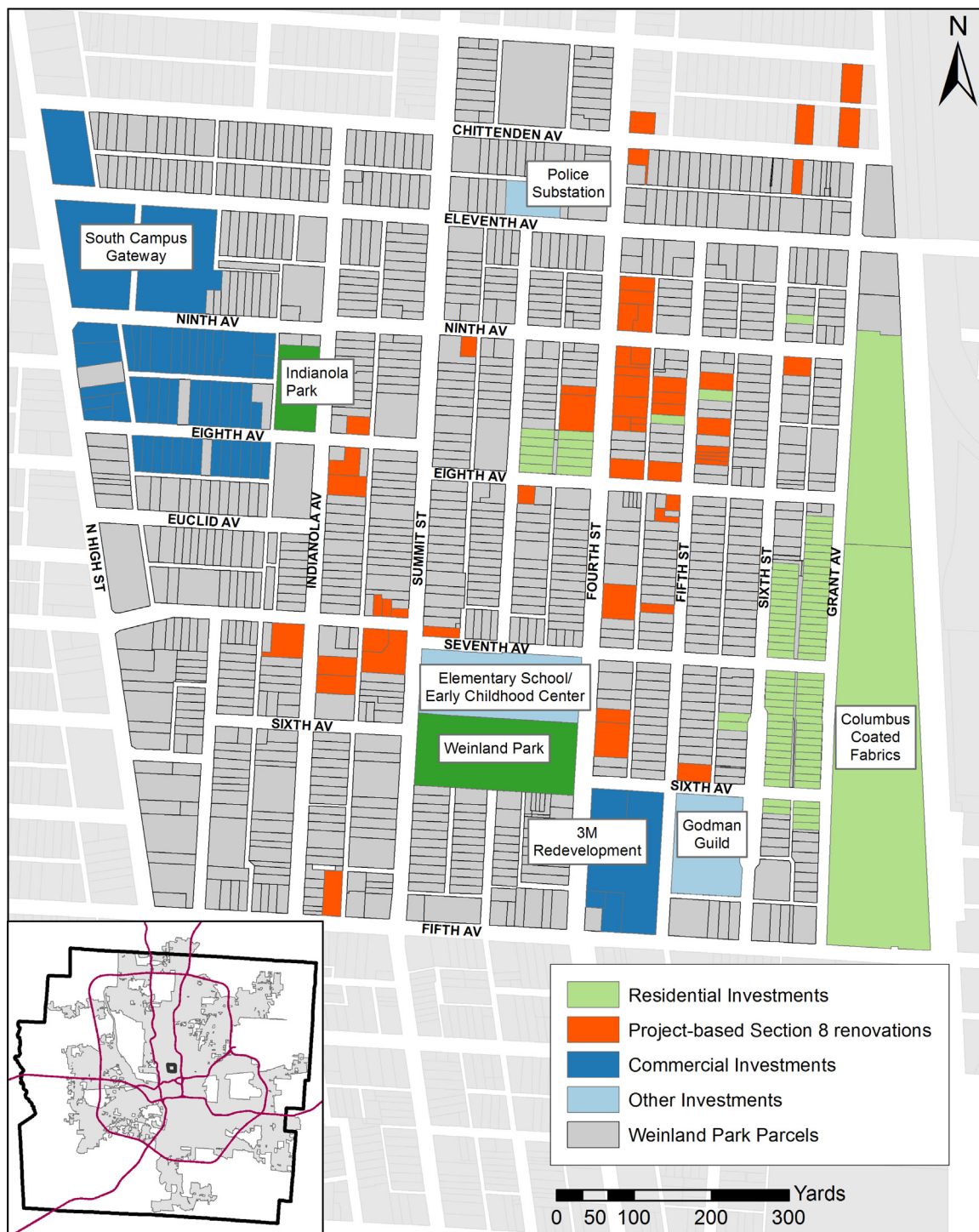


Fig. 1. Weinland Park reference map and location with Franklin County and the City of Columbus.

racially-mixed western half and an almost exclusively African-American eastern half.

## 2.2. Weinland park

Located approximately 2.5 miles north of downtown Columbus, Weinland Park is similar to many other central city neighborhoods. Long a blue-collar, racially-mixed community anchored by several factories to the east, the area underwent significant disinvestment beginning in the 1970s as nearby factories closed, jobs were lost, the housing stock deteriorated, and violence and gang-membership flourished (Webb, 2013).

When planning for the WPEP began in 2008, Weinland Park's population was approximately 4700 individuals in 950 families, 50% of which were female-headed. It was racially-heterogeneous with a substantial University-linked, largely Caucasian population (mostly on the northern and western margins), as well as a significant African-American community east of Summit Street (see Fig. 1) (Environmental Systems Research Institute, 2008). Its population was also quite youthful, with 43% between ages 15 and 29, and an additional 25% under age 15.

Given its history of disinvestment, Weinland Park scored poorly on several housing, social, and economic indicators. The

neighborhood lost almost 50% of its residents from 1970 to 2010, and suffered from both a very low homeownership rate (8% in 2008) and a high vacancy rate (19% in 2010) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Compared to the City of Columbus, Weinland Park's residents were more likely to be unemployed (15% vs. 8%), living below the poverty level (62% vs. 20%), and less likely to have graduated from high school or obtained a GED (22% vs. 12% of those 25 or older). In addition, Weinland Park's violent crime rate was over three times higher than Columbus-wide figures (Columbus Police Department, 2010).

To combat disinvestment, numerous investments have been targeted to the neighborhood since the early 2000s. These included: (i) redevelopment of a derelict campus bar strip into the mixed-use South Campus Gateway; (ii) renovation of an approximately 300-unit project-based Section 8 portfolio, turnover of its ownership, and stricter screening of prospective tenants; (iii) cleanup of a large brownfield site (formerly operated by Columbus Coated Fabrics) and preparation for its development as mixed-income housing; (iv) opening of a co-located public elementary school and early childhood education center, the latter operated by OSU's College of Education and Human Ecology, and (v) construction of a new police substation (Ball, 2005, 2007; Burns & Park, 2007; Ferenchik, 2010). Additional investments have been

**Table 2**  
Survey development process, implementation steps, and lessons learned.

	Step	Actions	Lessons learned
Pre-Implementation	1. Developing survey research approach	• Comprehensive design	• Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure instrument accurately captures the reality of the neighborhood
		• Geographically-defined systematic random sample	
		• Collaborative approach	• Know your sample when planning recruitment strategy
	2. Refining the survey	• Short-, medium-, and long-term benefits	
	2. Refining the survey	• Feedback collected through six focus groups	• Improve resident 'buy-in' through meeting short- and medium-term needs
	3. Assembling and training the survey team	• Diverse group of residents and students	
		• Training curricula included interviewing techniques, ethics, and recruitment	• Include community members on the survey team to help gain acceptance
		• Role-playing interviews and discussion	
4. Implementation		• Data collected in-person and continuous improvement process	• Be flexible and adapt to the situation
Post-Implementation	5. Data Analysis	• Descriptive statistics of quantitative data	• Discuss findings with stakeholders to clarify inaccurate or inconsistent findings
		• Segmentation analysis of quantitative data	
		• Content analysis of qualitative data	• Performing analyses and providing results likely to be ongoing rather than one-time event
		• Spatial analyses	
	6. Dissemination of Results	• Presentation to targeted stakeholders	• Findings can serve multiple and sometimes unexpected purposes
		• Letters to participants	
		• Community forum	• Ethical requirements of research may not be consistent with what stakeholders' requests
		• Written report distributed at community festival	

made in workforce development projects, financial counseling, foreclosure prevention, and Individual Development Accounts for low-income families with children (Webb, 2013).

Guiding these investments is the Weinland Park Collaborative (WPC), an organization that includes representatives from OSU, foundations, developers, the City of Columbus, neighborhood residents, non-profits, and other stakeholders (Weinland Park Collaborative, 2012). Informed and inspired by the 2006 *Weinland Park Neighborhood Plan*, WPC members have pledged to support and/or fund strategic investments in housing, public safety, education, and workforce development (Department of Development, 2006). Prior to these investments, stakeholders agreed on the need to gather baseline data about the neighborhood and residents' needs.

### 3. Survey development

The process used to design and implement the WPEP followed four steps: survey development, data collection, analysis, and disseminating results. In developing the survey, stakeholders first delineated an approach, refined the instrument based on feedback from six focus groups, and assembled and trained the survey team.

#### 3.1. Survey research approach

Stakeholders emphasized that the survey (i) be comprehensive; (ii) employ random sampling to ensure representativeness; (iii) be developed collaboratively with residents; and (iv) allow the collection of data to meet residents' short-, medium-, and long-term needs. The relevance of this design is discussed in the following paragraphs and summarized in Table 2.

##### *Comprehensive design*

To identify domains addressed by the survey, project leaders drew upon an interdisciplinary group of researchers from various OSU departments (including City Planning, Education, Human Development and Family Science, and Public Health). These scholars suggested areas of concern, indicators, and questions which had undergone validity and reliability testing. Project leaders also drew on widely-used surveys, such as the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs. The survey ultimately included the following domains: child development, education, economic well-being, workforce development, housing and mobility, neighborhood interaction, community involvement, public safety, access to basic needs and services, and health. The survey instrument was comprised of approximately 150 open- and closed-ended questions, and covered more than 100 indicators (see Appendix A).

##### *Geographically-defined systematic random sample*

Previous research and program development efforts in Weinland Park centered on formalized groups or service providers, which tended to privilege those groups and their perspective. To enhance representation, the WPEP utilized a geographically-defined systematic sampling technique (O'Connell, 2000). Interviewers visited every third housing unit and continued to recycle through the neighborhood until reaching a 25% threshold. The survey team first cataloged every housing unit in Weinland Park, providing the most up-to-date information about occupancy (Basolo & Strong, 2002; Sibirsky, 2001).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was necessary because there was no pre-existing database of units. Given Weinland Park's low homeownership rate and high prevalence of apartments – especially in detached residences that have been converted to rental units – identifying every housing unit was crucial for the sampling method.

##### *Collaborative approach*

Following Bergstrom et al. (1995), project leaders viewed collaboration as a process in which stakeholders work together to achieve shared goals. Collaborative approaches help ensure that (i) all stakeholders (including community members) advise on appropriate research methods; (ii) issues of cultural sensitivity are properly addressed; (iii) residents are familiar with the research process; and (iv) residents' values and are reflected in the research (Elam & Fenton, 2003). Successful collaborations can increase residents' community involvement, develop individual leadership skills, and empower residents (Bayne-Smith, Mizrahi, & Garcia, 2008).

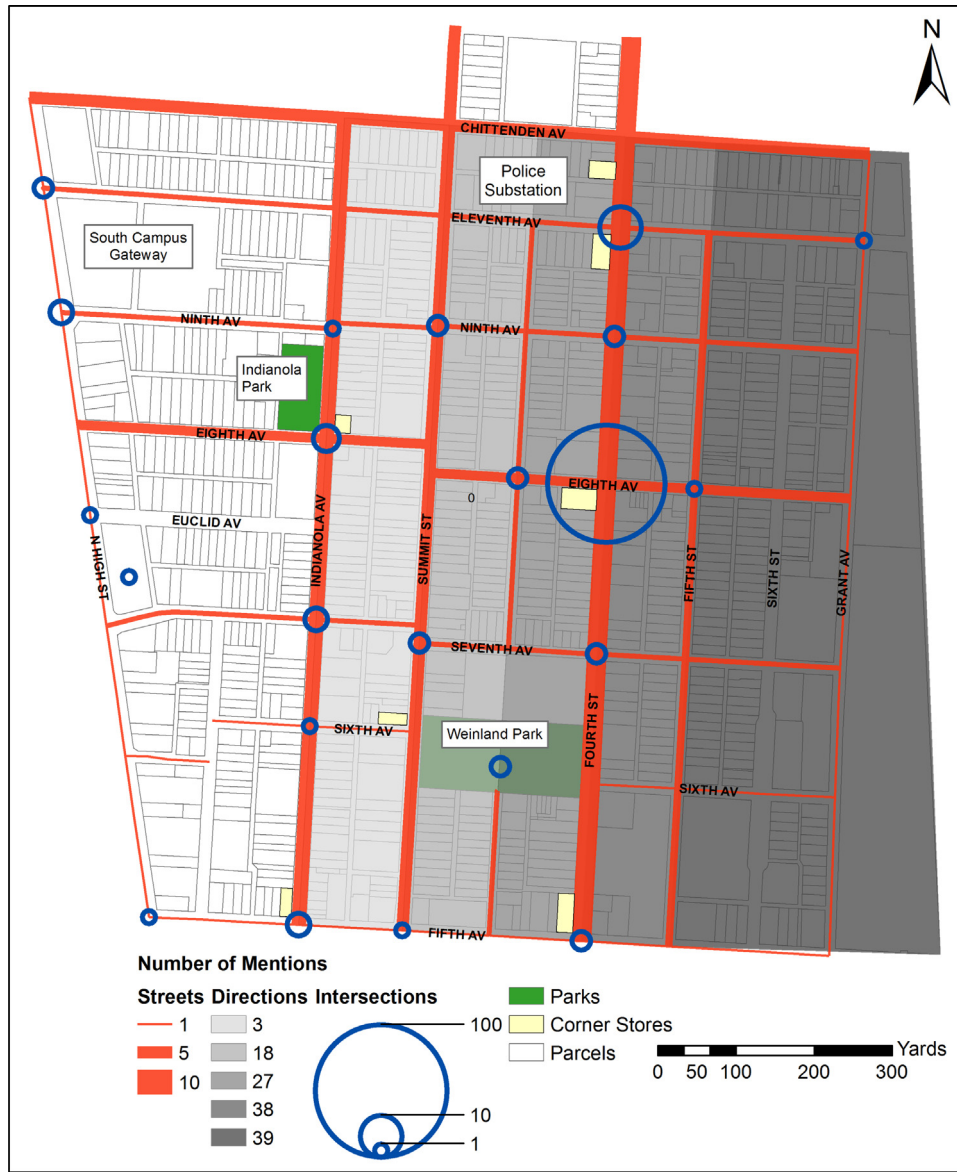
WPEP leaders viewed the inclusion of residents' perspectives and feedback as vital to success, and stakeholders were involved before, during, and after the survey. Before implementation, service providers participated in focus groups to refine the instrument, and several neighborhood residents were survey team members. Post-implementation, the local neighborhood association (the Weinland Park Community Civic Association, or WPCCA) provided important context to unexpected findings, requested additional analyses, and assisted in disseminating results to residents.

##### *Short-, medium-, and long-term benefits*

Prior to the WPEP, various non-profits, OSU courses, and other entities had conducted numerous studies and projects in Weinland Park, often in isolation and without disseminating results in a meaningful way (e.g., Hutzler & Resler, 2010; Kirwan Institute, 2007; Palmer, 2004; University Area Commission, 2008; de-identified). Given Weinland Park's proximity to OSU, it has served as a 'neighborhood of convenience' for service courses studying or conducting outreach to low-income households (Ferenchik, 2011). Many of these efforts included little to no follow-up, and their participation provided no tangible benefits to residents. Thus, many residents reported feeling over-surveyed or abandoned after sharing intimate life details – as one focus group participant noted, "like guinea pigs in a lab."

To encourage resident participation, we marketed the survey as having short-, medium-, and long-term benefits to residents. Meeting residents' short-term needs was accomplished through the survey's needs assessment and distributing the *Weinland Park Resource Guide* to participants and at community events. Interns from a workforce development program created the *Resource Guide*, which provided resources by topic (e.g., childcare, financial assistance, transportation), contact information, eligibility requirements, and bus routes to services. The survey team explained to participants how they could find assistance using the *Guide*.

In addition, the survey team informed residents that responses would be utilized in developing programming and outreach to address medium-term needs – i.e., those beyond immediate concerns but that can be addressed before Weinland Park's eventual revitalization. Given the survey's many domains, responses could inform numerous programs, some of which were implemented during or shortly after the WPEP. For example, OSU's Department of Nursing piloted "Modern Mommies and Me," a community-based prenatal education initiative, in Weinland Park; since 95% of respondents indicated that they shopped at the neighborhood's Kroger, the program provided outreach at this location. Given residents' concerns about safety and youth programming, the Columbus Foundation and its partners have sponsored Neighborhood Options for Youth, a diversionary program for juvenile offenders and at-risk adolescents (Ferenchik, 2013).



**Fig. 2.** Responses to survey question “Where in the neighborhood do you not feel safe?” Respondents answered with many types of responses that included streets, intersections, and directions (e.g., “past [east of] Fourth Street”). Spatial analysis showed that many respondents did not feel safe near corner stores. This map began conversations among stakeholders that resulted in the Weinland Park Collaborative purchasing stores and the corners of Fourth Street and Eighth Avenue (D & J) and Fourth Street and Chittenden Avenue (Kelly’s) (Binkley & Ferenchik, 2014).

### 3.2. Refining the survey

Prior to implementation, the survey was refined through cognitive testing (cf. Dillman, 2000; pp. 140–147) via six focus groups that represented a range of perspectives: (i) project-based Section 8 residents, (ii) single men, (iii) single mothers, (iv) homeowners, (v) individuals connected to services at the OSU Extension Center (which provides housing education, financial literacy, and workforce development), and (vi) service providers (Nassar-McMillan & Borders, 2002).<sup>2</sup> Feedback resulted in significant survey revisions, including rewording items, eliminating questions, and reordering topics and/or items within sections.

<sup>2</sup> While composition of the focus groups was based on Weinland Park’s demographics, no participants were Weinland Park residents.

### 3.3. Assembling and training the survey team

The survey team was a diverse group of nine individuals that reflected Weinland Park’s demographics. It included one former and two current residents, three service providers, and four students. Three were African-American and one Latino, and four were female. Having a diverse team that included current and former residents increased community trust and “ownership” of the project (Jackson et al., 2004). Project leaders supervised the survey team and included one employee of OSU’s Schoenbaum Family Center and one Ph.D. student, both with prior experience in community development and survey research.

Training topics included interviewing techniques, cultural competency, ethics, standardization and quality control of interviews, and recruitment methods, in addition to safety and procedures for dangerous situations (Evans, Mejia-Maya, Zayas, Boothroyd, & Rodriguez, 2001). Role-playing interviews followed by group discussion helped identify and address problems with the

survey prior to implementation. Gwiasda, Taluc, & Popkin (1997) described such role-playing as the most important part of the training they provided to those conducting interviews in dangerous neighborhoods in Chicago.

Even with training, issues around cultural competency, security, and participant vulnerability materialized. Project leaders developed a continuous improvement process that included weekly meetings where team members shared experiences and offered advice for particularly difficult situations, and *ad hoc* meetings with supervisors as needed. In this way, training was ongoing throughout the survey.

#### 4. Data collection, analysis, and dissemination of results

##### 4.1. Data collection

The WPEP was conducted in-person rather than by phone or email.<sup>3</sup> The survey instrument was long for a phone survey or mailing; the numerous qualitative questions made such methods a less-than-ideal method of data collection; and distribution of participant incentives via mail would have been problematic (Dillman, 2000). In-person interviews helped to build rapport between team members and residents, and helped ensure issues of cultural sensitivity were addressed (Ellis & Krosnick, 1999).

Per the geographic random sampling technique, teams attempted to conduct the survey at every third house. Residents were considered eligible if they lived or “stayed” at the unit being surveyed and were 18 years or older. If no eligible individual was home, a flyer was left at the residence.<sup>4</sup> Each unit was contacted three times; second attempts were coordinated during a different time of day, and a third attempt was made on a different day (possibly a weekend) and/or time.

Interviews were done either at the time of recruitment or where and when participants were most comfortable. The importance of a one-on-one conversation allowing privacy and quiet was emphasized (Pebly, Sastry, Peterson, & Yuhas, 2011; World Bank, 2002). To encourage participation, interviewers stressed that completing the survey was voluntary; that respondents could refuse to answer questions; that their responses would be kept confidential and would be combined with others; and that their names would not be used. In addition, interviewers emphasized the survey’s importance in understanding residents’ needs and measuring progress towards shared goals (Elam & Fenton, 2003; Yancey, Ortega, & Kumanyika, 2006). Participants received a \$20 Kroger gift card as a participant incentive.

Two people conducted each interview for reasons of safety and efficiency; one person conducted the interview while the other recorded responses by hand (Kovari & Davis, 2010; Renger, Passons, & Cimetta, 2003). A Spanish-speaker interviewed participants who preferred to conduct the interview in Spanish. When possible, interviewers were matched to participants according to race, ethnicity, and/or gender; team members found such matches to be an effective means of building rapport (Elam and Fenton, 2003; Evans et al., 2001; Jackson et al., 2004; Vickers, Craig, & Atkin, 2012; Yancey et al., 2006). Team members noted and recorded non-verbal cues and body language and responded appropriately. For example, if the respondent was making more eye contact with one

interviewer than another, that interviewer would continue to ask the questions, and the second interviewer took over as a recorder.

Interviews were not audio recorded as stakeholders (especially community members) feared that residents would be less-than-forthright if a recording device was present, especially given the sensitive nature of some questions. Over the course of six months, the team interviewed 440 adults, representing 26% of housing units.

##### 4.2. Data analysis

Following data entry, project leaders performed initial data analyses, which included descriptive statistics and segmentation analyses by population cohort (e.g. gender and race) (Chang, Nguyen, Murdock, Pell, & Femenella, 2000). Project leaders utilized content analysis to categorize open-ended questions into themes. Additionally, researchers mapped spatially-relevant findings using GIS. Maps were created to show where residents reported feeling safe or unsafe (see Fig. 2), places of employment, and frequently-attended places, such as schools and grocery stores, where service delivery could be targeted.

##### 4.3. Dissemination of results

Survey results were disseminated in four ways: (i) formal presentations to stakeholder groups, including residents, funders, and service providers; (ii) letters to participants; (iii) a community forum; and (iv) a written report distributed at the Weinland Park Neighborhood Festival and posted online to the WPCCA (Forrest and Goldstein, 2010). Results were written and presented primarily by project leaders, and interpretation of findings was refined through stakeholder feedback.

Initial findings were first discussed with stakeholder groups including the Weinland Park Collaborative and WPCCA. These conversations helped clarify findings, especially those considered surprising, some of which are discussed in the lessons-learned section of this paper (Pankaj, Welsh, & Ostenson, 2011). The survey team recognized the vital role dissemination can play in maintaining relationships with the community and spurring change, and project leaders presented results at various forums, adapting language and terminology depending on the target audience (Chen, Diaz, Lucas, & Rosenthal, 2010).

#### 5. Lessons learned

Thus far, the paper has described the WPEP’s development, implementation, analysis, and dissemination of results. This section presents lessons learned during each of the four major stages, summarized in Table 2.

##### 5.1. Survey development

*Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure the survey instrument respects participants’ sensitive information and captures the realities of the neighborhood*

Service providers and residents of neighborhoods similar to Weinland Park participated in six focus groups to refine the survey through cognitive testing; these resulted in crucial revisions that greatly improved the instrument. For example, participants noted that many residents do not refer to the neighborhood as “Weinland Park.” As a result, “Weinland Park” was never used in the survey tool; instead, participants were shown a map with boundaries of “the neighborhood” and asked how they referred to this area. This label/wording was then used throughout the remainder of the survey process. Changing the wording in this manner empowered residents to identify their neighborhood on their own terms.

<sup>3</sup> Prior to each interview, the participant signed a consent form (which was approved by Ohio State University’s Institutional Review Board) to participate in the interview.

<sup>4</sup> Flyers included the address of the unit selected by the sampling method. Given the participant incentives, many residents saw the flyers and contacted the survey team, hoping to be eligible for participation. Leaving the address on the flyer helped to ensure that only the appropriate residents were surveyed.

Focus group participants also made important suggestions about question wording and placement. Originally, the survey contained sensitive items that asked about such topics as personal drug and alcohol use and health status. Participants felt that these questions were too intrusive and that respondents would either refuse to answer them or answer them untruthfully. In response, several questions were deleted or broadened to ask whether anyone in the respondent's *household* was affected (by, e.g., domestic violence), or if the respondent felt that the issue was a problem "in the neighborhood" rather than asking about the individual's own behavior (e.g., drug use). Participants also suggested moving more sensitive topics to the end of the survey so that the interviewer and interviewee could gain rapport before discussing more personal topics. Paying careful attention to survey question wording and placement likely reduced refusals and increased interviewees' cooperation and candor.

#### *Know your study sample when planning recruitment strategy*

Focus group feedback also raised an important issue regarding recruitment. Service providers explained that those who 'live' in Weinland Park often are not on the lease. Therefore, they are considered neither part of a household nor the head of household as typically defined by practitioners and researchers. As a result, we considered eligible participants to include individuals who live or "stay" at the housing unit and are at least 18 years old. This allowed a more inclusive sample that better reflected the reality of the neighborhood (Beaman & Dillon, 2012; Kleinjans, 2010; Trochim, 2006).

#### *Improve resident 'buy-in' by addressing participants' short-term needs*

Focus group participants believed that questions probing residents' histories, including incidences of homelessness, prevalence of physical and mental illness, and alcohol use would bring about emotional responses. In response, team members developed the *Weinland Park Resource Guide*, informed residents of resources, and developed an emergency protocol in the case of encountering a participant that might be at risk of harming themselves or others. Further, the survey team informed residents that their responses would be utilized in developing different programming for the neighborhood, such as safety initiatives. Providing residents with this information, we believe, encouraged their participation as they felt their responses would be put to practical use, not just for research.

## 5.2. Implementation

#### *Geographically-defined samples can be representative*

The WPEP utilized a geographically-defined random sampling technique, where survey-takers visited every third housing units until 25% of units completed a survey. We find that the WPEP samples comports closely with Census data on several indicators, including homeownership (8% in the WPEP vs. 9% in the Census), householders under 30 years old (45% vs. 43%), and families with children headed by single women (17% for both the WPEP and Census). Two indicators where the WPEP sample does not align as well with Census data are African-American population and educational attainment: 50% of our sample identified as Black, while only 32% of households are African-American, per 2010 ACS estimates. Further, 46% of our sample had a high school diploma or lower educational attainment, compared to 56% in 2010 ACS estimates

#### *Be flexible and adapt to the situation*

Conducting the survey in private was part of the interview protocol, as certain questions addressed sensitive issues such as domestic violence, physical and mental health ailments, and drug

use. Team members found it was often a challenge to meet this requirement and had to adapt to the situation. For example, at times teams decided that one interviewer could assist with childcare if this allowed for a more private forum. Further, when recruiting participants, the team allowed the interviewee to choose a location that would provide privacy and be comfortable for them.

#### *On-the-ground presence helps gain acceptance for the survey process*

Survey team members reported some instances of feeling unwelcome while canvassing the neighborhood toward the beginning of implementation, but these feelings dissipated over time. As neighborhood residents saw team members regularly walking streets and became familiar with them directly or through 'word of mouth,' they no longer felt threatened by the survey team and not only welcomed them, but 'stood up' for them if they were not being 'respected.' Consistent visibility in Weinland Park and inclusion of residents on the survey team were crucial to gaining acceptance within the neighborhood.

## 5.3. Data analysis

#### *Discuss findings with stakeholders to clarify inconsistent results*

Some findings appeared inconsistent when compared to other data collection efforts, and shed light on limitations that may exist within this type of community research. For example, we collected obesity rates through self-report and found that the obesity rate in Weinland Park was approximately 8% – much lower than Columbus's rate of 28% (Community Research Partners, 2011). Stakeholders discussed the findings and proposed possible reasons for the low rate: the incidence of participants going to the doctor may be low, and/or self-reporting may not be an accurate measure of obesity.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Performing analyses and providing results are likely to be ongoing rather than a one-time event*

While presenting preliminary analyses to stakeholder groups, several organizations asked for additional analyses to address specific questions. For example, WPCCA's housing subcommittee requested more detailed analyses related to upcoming housing investments (such as Lease-to-Own and Habitat for Humanity). Analyses of income and household size revealed that, based on income, only a small percentage of households (17%) could take advantage of upcoming opportunities. This finding led stakeholders to discuss the feasibility of co-ops and community land trusts that would meet residents' needs and prevent displacement of those not targeted by these investments.

#### *Develop an action plan for data storage and access during the planning phase*

One shortcoming of the WPEP was the failure to plan and budget for data storage and accessibility early in the evaluation process. While project leaders felt that democratizing data is important and have made every effort to make data available for analyses by others, in practice this has mostly been done on a case-by-case basis as data reside on a university server. Following data entry, project leaders explored options for providing access to the data online and also considered a research software package to

<sup>5</sup> Obesity statistics are typically calculated as an individual's Body Mass Index (BMI), which is a function of an individual's height and weight, while the WPEP survey asked "Has a doctor ever told you or someone in your family that they are obese?" This data might be one shortcoming of the in-person interview method, as one would assume that respondents are less likely to be forthcoming concerning such a personal and potentially embarrassing topic.



**Table 3**  
Relationship between RE-AIM model and the WPEP.

Model component	Relationship to WPEP
Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveying every third household</li> <li>• Multiple attempts to contact each household</li> <li>• Interviewing when and where convenient</li> </ul>
Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-person interviews</li> <li>• Providing Resource Guide for negative outcomes</li> <li>• Conducting follow-up when ethically necessary</li> </ul>
Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used focus group to test intervention</li> <li>• Survey instrument used in another neighborhood</li> </ul>
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing training to ensure consistency of survey delivery</li> <li>• Very high completion rate of survey</li> <li>• Residents not surveyed requested Resource Guide</li> </ul>
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued interventions by Weinland Park Collaborative</li> <li>• Neighborhood festival that continues annually</li> <li>• Resource Guide distributed to other organizations</li> </ul>

enable easy data sharing. However, none of these options proved feasible given their high costs and technical requirements.

#### 5.4. Disseminating results

##### *Disseminate results in a variety of venues*

The results of the survey and needs assessment were disseminated in numerous venues, including formal presentations at the WPCCA and its sub-committees, a community forum, letters to participants, and a written report.<sup>6</sup> Despite our efforts, we found that some residents – especially the lowest-income, who tend to move very frequently – were harder to reach through these dissemination outlets. Inclusive follow-up with residents in poverty may require canvassing the neighborhood (similar to initial survey recruitment) or forums/processes that do not yet exist in Weinland Park (e.g., community bulletin boards).

Disseminating results widely can also reduce duplicative data collection efforts. As discussed previously, Weinland Park has served as a 'neighborhood of convenience' for OSU researchers and service classes, which has led to many residents feeling over-surveyed and exploited (Ferenchik, 2011). Avoiding unnecessary

duplication of our data collection efforts by other interested groups required constant vigilance. When made aware of redundant data collection plans, we offered to share information about our process and our findings. This included presentations to a variety of groups (e.g., OSU classes and service providers); meetings with groups interested in conducting research projects in the neighborhood; and emails via listservs to describe the project, stress its comprehensive nature, and demonstrate its relevance to each target group.

##### *Findings can serve multiple and sometimes unexpected purposes*

Interview questions meant to capture information about residents' religious attendance, library use, and shopping habits also suggested strategic locations for engaging the community, something that has been a challenge for neighborhood service providers. Analyses from the survey revealed that over half of respondents visit the Northside Library, many on a regular basis (75% at least several times/month) and 95% of respondents shop for groceries at a nearby Kroger. Service providers have used these findings to help identify outreach locations for programs such as a Modern Mommies & Me.

Similarly, results shed light on barriers not previously understood, and led to community conversations that might otherwise never have taken place. For example, we found that health was the most mentioned barrier to employment, which came as a surprise to stakeholders and service providers. This changed planning for employment initiatives from job placement program to more holistic approaches, such as workforce development targeting health (including mental health) and expunging criminal histories, similar to a model developed in Cincinnati (Phillips & Garrett,

<sup>6</sup> One shortcoming of our dissemination strategy is that we did not capture the "reach" of each method, so we are unable to say which methods, exactly, were most successful. However, by adopting an 'all of the above' approach that incorporated mailings to survey participants and several community presentations (including at the annual neighborhood festival), we believe that a large number of Weinland Park residents were aware of the evaluation report. Further, many reach metrics would fail to capture "word of mouth" as news of the evaluation report spread throughout the neighborhood.

2010). It also sparked discussions around developing a “Health Home” to promote health and well-being in Weinland Park

#### *Neighborhood surveys allow for a deeper understanding of phenomena*

Despite knowledge of the high rate of unemployment in Weinland Park, the survey also identified significant underemployment, with only 18% of residents employed full-time. It also shed light on the characteristics of employment, with 67% of those who worked full-time reporting they were at the “beck and call” of their employer. These findings led to discussions regarding concerns that workforce development programs often are only able to place individuals in part-time employment. To better meet the needs of residents, current community conversations are trying to further understand barriers to employment and how bureaucratic policies influence the process of helping residents attain and sustain employment.

#### *Stakeholder data requests might not be consistent with ethical requirements of research*

One of the most frequent requests from stakeholders was access to the list of survey participants and to their associated needs for outreach and services. Of course, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) that approved our project requires that confidentiality of participants be strictly enforced, making it impossible to share data in such a manner. Underscoring this guideline with service providers and other stakeholders was almost as important as stressing this to the participants of the survey.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper has illustrated the development, implementation, and lessons learned from the Weinland Park Evaluation Project, an effort to collect comprehensive baseline data through a door-to-door neighborhood survey. The authors hope that the paper can serve as a resource to other communities that seek to gather data about their neighborhood through a comprehensive survey and needs assessment.

Although the WPEP was not directly a public health intervention, we find that the RE-AIM model is well-suited for conceptualizing the Weinland Park community evaluation process (see Table 3). Given the project’s goals, we prioritized the *Reach*, *Implementation*, and *Maintenance* aspects of the model. Regarding *Reach*, survey had a high level of participation (26% of households) drawn from every third home in the neighborhood. We made up to three attempts to contact each participant, leaving a flyer with an address and a phone number to contact us. Participants were interviewed in multiple settings, choosing the time and location most convenient or comfortable for them. In terms of *Efficacy*, the WPEP considered both positive and negative outcomes. There was a wide range of positive outcomes, from increased collaboration to identification of new locations in which to engage residents. The WPEP addressed potential negative outcomes that participants might experience through the *Resource Guide*. The survey itself measured multiple types of outcomes, including behavioral, quality of life, and neighborhood satisfaction. Further, the WPEP conducted in-person interviews, which prior RE-AIM research have identified as having greater efficacy (Glasgow et al., 1999).

Other aspects of the RE-AIM model show how it provides a useful framework for considering the proportion and representativeness of settings, adherence in implementation, and endurance of the evaluation findings and survey itself in a community evaluation – such as WPEP. *Adoption*, or the proportion and representativeness of settings that adopt a program, points to the importance that the WPEP placed on conducting the initial focus groups with a variety of stakeholders and residents, interviewing

participants at a broad spectrum of locales, and disseminating the findings in multiple venues and for different audiences. Further, the survey instrument and methods used in the WPEP were later used in another low-income Columbus neighborhood, Beaumont. Much attention was focused on *Implementation* of the WPEP. Interviewers were trained prior to the survey’s launch, then ongoing “touch base” meetings ensured adherence to procedures. Having two team members conduct interviews helped provide consistency. As a result of conducting interviews at a time and place convenient to them, nearly all participants who enrolled in the WPEP completed the survey and took the *Resource Guide*. *Maintenance*, the final aspect of RE-AIM, considers the extent to which new practices or behaviors have endured. The WPEP has played a key role in guiding planning efforts of groups such as the Weinland Park Collaborative and sparking ongoing research, evaluation, and analysis of results. Discussions are ongoing about doing a follow-up survey.

We conclude by highlighting some of the strengths and weaknesses to the approach used in conducting the WPEP, including its (i) collaborative approach, (ii) ability to meet residents’ short-, medium-, and long-term needs, and (iii) comprehensive and systematic approach.

First, the WPEP’s collaborative approach provided benefits to all stakeholders involved. It strengthened relationships between Weinland Park and OSU, helped develop individual capacity of survey team members – some of whom are neighborhood residents, and built trust among stakeholders. The collaborative approach also provided opportunities to build individual capacity and promote co-learning among survey team members, as students learned about neighborhood revitalization from residents, while residents learned research and evaluation skills that will help them grow in their career paths (Khanlou & Peter, 2005; Masuda, Creighton, Nixon, & Frankish, 2011; Raphael et al., 1999; Torres, 1998). Finally, the project built trust and relationships between stakeholders, who have used the findings to plan revitalization efforts.

Second, by meeting resident s’short-term needs, the *Weinland Park Resource Guide* was popular among residents and service providers, and numerous other groups have requested copies to share with individuals they serve. Offering the *Resource Guide* to participants provided an additional incentive and enabled the survey team to begin to address short term needs of residents. Beaumont, a community in north Columbus that replicated the Weinland Park survey, created a similar guide to distribute during their data collection.

Further, the WPEP allowed funders to meet residents’ medium-term needs. For instance, mapping responses to “Where do you feel unsafe?” highlighted the relationship between feelings of safety (or lack thereof) and corner stores, with many respondents highlighted drug and other illegal activities that proliferate at these locations (see Fig. 2). In response, the WPC began exploring ways to gain control of these corner stores (especially the D & J Carryout at the corner of 4th Street and 8th Avenue), eventually purchasing and two of these in 2014 (Binkley & Ferenchik, 2014; Binkley, 2014).

Third, the WPEP’s comprehensive nature and rigorous sampling method produced data useful to a diverse set of stakeholders, including researchers, service providers, and funders. The survey’s coverage of a wide array of domains increased awareness of the overlapping barriers residents face, and has encouraged stakeholders to consider holistic solutions for programs already or soon to be implemented. The random sampling technique enabled inclusion of a representative cohort of residents, and made it possible consider responses by various population cohorts.

We believe there are valuable lessons to be learned in designing and conducting neighborhood surveys in urban communities

undergoing revitalization. The WPEP was a crucial first step in understanding the needs of the community and setting priorities going forward, and provides an example of how similar projects can be undertaken in other urban neighborhoods faced with similar challenges.

### Acknowledgements

Research for this paper was conducted through the International Poverty Solutions Collaborative, and was funded by grant TFB09-1551 from the Robert W. Stevenson & Martha G. Staub funds of The Columbus Foundation. We thank the many community participants from Weinland Park and other professionals who facilitated the process and enhanced our understanding. Among the latter, of particular note is the late Lawrence Brown, who was a longstanding Professor and Chair in The Ohio State University's Department of Geography. The authors also wish to thank the Weinland Park Evaluation Team – Weslie Coleman, Catherine Girves, Christina Harris, Kristen Nelson, Samuel Saldivar, Clarence Thompson, and Brett Zehner – in addition to Kristin Porter for proofreading assistance.

### Appendix A<sup>7</sup>

#### Weinland Park Survey: Domains and Indicators

##### 1. Demographics

- Gender
- Race
- Birthdate
- Relationship/Marital Status
- Number of Children
- Education Level
- Religion
- Religious Attendance

##### 2. Housing and Mobility

- Household Size and Composition
- Presences/Number of Guests
- Renter/Ownership Status
- Interest to Buy (or continue to own) Home in Weinland Park
- Length of Time Residing in Current Home
- Purchase Price of Home
- Monthly Mortgage/Rent
- Name of Neighborhood of Residence
- Time Residing in Neighborhood
- Place of Residence Prior to Weinland Park
- Number of Times Moved in the Last Year
- Number of Times moved in the Last 5 years
- School Mobility of Children as a Result of Moves
- Homeless Status over the Last 12 Months
- Satisfaction with Housing
- Condition of Home
- Home Repairs Needed
- Neighborhood of Choice in 5 Years

3.

##### Access to Basic Needs

- Location of Store/Pantry where Shop/Get Food
- Means of Transport to Grocery Store/Pantry
- Frequency of Grocery Shopping/Accessing Food at Pantry
- Location of Stores where Shop (for items outside of Food)

##### 4. Neighbor Interaction

- Number of Neighbors Know by Name
- Characteristics of Interactions with Neighbors
- Frequency of Interactions with Neighbors

##### 5. Personal Interests/Community Involvement

- Personal Hobbies/Interests
- Volunteer Status and Description of Volunteer Job/Role

##### 6. Public Safety

- Safety Perceptions alone during the Day
- Safety Perceptions alone at Night
- Safety Perceptions for Children without Supervision during the Day
- Factors that cause Safe and Unsafe Perceptions in the Neighborhood
- Location where feel Unsafe in Neighborhood
- Location where feel Safe in the Neighborhood
- Level of Concern around Home Burglaries, Automobile Break-ins, Personal Robbery, Domestic Violence, Drug Trafficking, Gun Violence, Prostitution, Vandalism, and Littering in the Neighborhood
- Numbers Affected by Home Burglaries, Automobile Break-ins, Personal Robbery, Domestic Violence, Drug Trafficking, Gun Violence, Prostitution, Vandalism, and Littering in the Neighborhood
- Personal Impact of Home Burglaries, Automobile Break-ins, Personal Robbery, Domestic Violence, Drug Trafficking, Gun Violence, Prostitution, Vandalism, and Littering in the Neighborhood
- Perceptions of the following as Neighborhood Problems: Noise and Poor Air Quality from Traffic, Unsupervised Youth, Infestation of Pests, Aggressive Dogs, and Strangers from outside the Neighborhood
- Trust of Police

##### 7. Workforce Development

- Participation Levels in Workforce Development Programs
- Workforce Development Programs of Attendance
- Workforce Development Program's Focus
- Month and Year of Attendance/Completion of program
- Perceptions of Workforce Development Programs Attended

##### 8. Education for Children and Child Development

- Location/Name of Schools of Attendance
- Satisfaction with Schools
- Factors that Impact School Choice
- Involvement in Extracurricular Activities
- Type of Extracurricular Activities Children Participate In
- Barriers to Participating in Extracurricular Activities
- How Children Spend Free Time outside of School
- Parental Interaction with Schools
- Frequency of Parental Interaction with Schools
- Barriers to Parental Interaction with Schools

<sup>7</sup> For those interested in accessing the Weinland Park survey tool in its entirety, please contact Tamar Forrest at forrest.97@osu.edu.

- Frequency of use of Childcare Services
- Location/Name of Childcare Providers
- Numbers Receiving Childcare Subsidies

#### 9. Use of Computers and Media

- Computer Skills (Adults and Children)
- Location of Computer Access (Adults and Children)
- Access to Internet (Adults and Children)
- Frequency of Computer Use (Adults and Children)
- Computer Use Patterns (Adults and Children)
- Literacy Rate
- Frequency of Reading
- Types of Reading Materials Frequently Read
- Frequency of Reading to Children under 11 years
- Frequency of Library Attendance
- Location of Library Frequented

#### 10. Economic Well-being

- Employment Status
- Employment Patterns
- Location of Employment
- Description of Employment
- Means of Transport to Work
- Length of Time to get to Work
- Consistency of Hours of Employment
- Salary
- Employment Satisfaction
- Numbers Seeking Employment
- Length of Time Seeking Employment
- Type of Employment Looking For
- Barriers to Employment
- Spouse's/Partner's Employment Status
- Numbers Receiving TANF, Unemployment Benefits, Food Stamps, Title 20, and Section 8
- Access to Credit Card(s)
- Access to Bank Account(s)
- Use of Payday Lending
- Use of Pawn Shops
- Frequency Behind on Bills

#### 11. Health

- Access to Health Insurance
- Numbers Receiving MEDICAID or SCHIP
- Numbers diagnosed Physical and Learning Disabilities
- Numbers diagnosed with Asthma, Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, Heart Disease, and/or Obesity
- Numbers Diagnosed with Depression, Anxiety Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, and/or Schizophrenia
- Numbers diagnosed with Hearing or Vision Problems
- Numbers of Children with Special Health Needs
- Satisfaction with Medical Treatment
- Location of Access to Medical Treatment
- Frequency of Visits to Emergency Room
- Access to Pots/Pans/Working Stove
- Frequency of Cooking Dinner at Home
- Description of "Typical" Dinner Cooked
- Frequency of Eating Fruits and Vegetables
- Frequency of Eating Fast Food
- Frequency of Alcohol Consumption
- Perception of Recreational Drug Use as a Neighborhood Problem
- Frequency of Tobacco Use

#### 12. Feedback about Neighborhood

- Satisfaction with Neighborhood
- Perception of Community Attributes – i.e., Access to Affordable Housing, Shopping, Green Space, Transportation; Neighborhood Appearance; Mobility Safety
- Perception of Changes in Community over the Past 2 Years
- Best Things about Neighborhood
- Worst Things about Neighborhood
- Improvements Needed in Neighborhood
- Perception of whether ones "Voice Matters" in Decision-making
- Participation Levels in Community Development/Organizing
- Interest in Participating in Community Development/Organizing

#### 13. Needs Assessment

- Numbers Needing Access to Basic Needs, Adult Support, Services for Children, Health Services, and/or Social Services
- Access to and Quality of Informal and Formal Support Networks

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